

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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*****ADVISORY – Important Information*****

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TO: All MaineHAN Recipients in Southwest Coast, Mid-Coast, and Western Interior Regions of Maine

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: **Air Quality Advisory for Ozone**

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Air Quality Advisory for Ozone Today

(AUGUSTA)-- Ground-level ozone concentrations are expected to reach the unhealthy for sensitive groups level today for the Southwest Coast, Mid-Coast and Western Interior according to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently revised the national ozone standard from 84 parts per billion (ppb) to 75 ppb. At the same time, the Air Quality Index (AQI) for ozone was revised to reflect the new more protective standard. If Maine has a typical summer this year, the DEP will likely be encouraging you to take precautions to protect your health more often than usual because of this revised standard.

At high ozone levels, individuals suffering from a respiratory disease such as asthma, children, and healthy active adults can experience reduced lung function and irritation. When this happens, individuals may notice a shortness of breath, coughing, throat irritation, and/or experience an uncomfortable sensation in their chest.

Some actions you can take to protect your health during periods of unhealthy air quality include:

- ◆ Avoid strenuous activity, such as jogging, during mid-day.
- ◆ Close windows and circulate indoor air with a fan or air conditioner.
- ◆ Avoid using aerosol products such as cleaners, paints, and other lung irritants.
- ◆ Give yourself a break and take it easy.

Ground level ozone is formed by chemical reactions between nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and sunlight. Man-made sources of NO_x and VOCs include automobiles, trucks and buses, large combustion and industrial sources such as power generating facilities, consumer products such as paints and cleaners, and gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

Citizens can take the following actions to help reduce emissions that contribute to the formation of ozone:

- Conserve electricity.
- Choose a cleaner commute, such as carpooling or using public transportation.
- Defer the use of gas-powered lawn and garden equipment until after dusk.
- Limit idling of vehicles.
- Refuel cars and trucks after dusk.
- Combine errands and reduce vehicle trips.
- Use environmentally-friendly paints and cleaning products with low VOC content.

For more information call DEP's toll free ozone hotline at 1-800-223-1196 or visit DEP's air quality web site by going to MaineDEP.com and select 'Maine Air Quality Forecast'.